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Viewing cable 08PARIS460, BETANCOURT HOSTAGE SITUATION RENDERS "POOR"

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08PARIS460**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08PARIS460	2008-03-12 18:56	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Paris

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.elespectador.com/wikileaks>

VZCZCXRO3115
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2244
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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0472
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0542
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000460

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2018

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SUBJECT: BETANCOURT HOSTAGE SITUATION RENDERS "POOR"
OTHERWISE STRONG FRANCO-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS

Classified By: POL/MC Josiah Rosenblatt for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On March 6, Colombian Ambassador to France Fernando Cepeda Ulloa described Franco-Colombian relations as "poor" in a breakfast meeting with Ambassador Stapleton and WHA PDAS Craig Kelly. Cepeda encapsulated the current distrust between the two governments by suggesting that the GOF considers Colombia a banana republic that takes policy direction from the United States. He complained that the GOF coordinates public messaging with Franco-Colombian hostage Ingrid Betancourt's family in a way that undermines President Uribe.

¶2. (C) Cepeda recalled that under Chirac he felt only limited pressure concerning Betancourt. Chirac simply urged Cepeda to tell President Uribe that "a military solution is not the best option." There was little movement on the issue until Sarkozy took office in May 2007. Since then, Franco-Colombian relations have essentially been compressed to this single issue, according to Cepeda, who is reportedly close to President Uribe. He attributed President Sarkozy's single-minded focus on securing Betancourt's freedom to a personal enmity towards former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and the desire to prove Sarkozy could accomplish what Villepin could not. He described the Betancourt family efforts to publicize Ingrid's detention as a textbook media success and a textbook disaster to achieving her freedom. Despite his claim of "poor" overall relations, Cepeda did note that Franco-Colombian relations were positive with fruitful cultural exchanges, and welcome trade and investment flows. There is also good bilateral counter-narcotics cooperation.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Sarkozy's personal involvement in the FARC hostage case may have contributed to securing the release of some lower-profile hostages while perversely raising Ingrid Betancourt's value to the FARC as a hostage. A desire to best his rival de Villepin, who failed after expending tremendous effort to win Betancourt's freedom, may have triggered Sarkozy's intervention. However, Betancourt's long-standing public profile in France predates Sarkozy's presidency and release would have naturally appealed to Sarkozy as a challenge and as a demonstration of his ability to apply his will and bring results. Despite positive fundamentals in the Franco-Colombian relationship, this hostage situation negatively colors what should be a good news story between France and Colombia.

¶4. (U) This message has been cleared by PDAS Kelly.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

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